

[Constitution as of July, 1947]

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CONSTITUTION (FUNDAMENTAL LAW) OF THE
BELORUSSIAN SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLIC

Chapter I. The Social Structure

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Art. 1. The Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic is a socialist state of workers and peasants.

Art. 2. The Soviets of Working People's deputies, which grew and attained strength as a result of the overthrow of the landlords and capitalists, the achievement of the dictatorship of the proletariat, the liberation of the Belorussian people from national oppression by socialism and by the Russian imperialist bourgeoisie and the destruction of the Belorussian nationalist counter-revolution, constitute the political foundation of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic.

Art. 3. In the Belorussian SSR all power belongs to the working people of town and country as represented by the Soviets of Working People's Deputies.

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Art. 4. The socialist system of economy and the socialist ownership of the means and instruments of production firmly established as a result of the abolition of the capitalist system of economy, the abrogation of private ownership of the means and instruments of production and the elimination of the exploitation of man by man, constitute the economic foundation of the Belorussian SSR.

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Art. 5. Socialist property in the Belorussian SSR exists either in the form of State property (the possession of the whole people) or in the form of co-operative and collective farm property (property of a collective farm or property of a co-operative association).

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Art. 6. The land, its natural deposits, waters, forests, mills, factories, mines, rail, water and air transport, banks, communications, large State-organized agricultural enterprises (State farms, machine and tractor stations and the like), as well as municipal enterprises and the bulk of dwelling houses in the cities and industrial localities, are State property, that is, belong to the whole people.

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Art. 7. The common enterprise of collective farms and co-operative organizations, with their live stock and implements, and the products of the collective farms and co-operative organizations, as well as their common buildings, constitute the common socialist property of the collective farms and co-operative organizations.

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In addition to its basic income from the public collective farm enterprise, every household in a collective farm has for its ~~private~~ use a small plot of land attached to the dwelling and, as its ~~private~~ property, a subsidiary establishment on the plot, a dwelling house, live stock, poultry and minor agricultural implements — in accordance with the Rules of the Agricultural Artel.

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Art. 8. The land occupied by collective farms is secured to them for their use free of charge and for an unlimited time, that is, in perpetuity.

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Art. 9. Alongside the socialist system of economy, which is the predominant form of economy in the Belorussian SSR, the law permits the small private economy of individual peasants and handicraftsmen, based on their personal labour and precluding the exploitation of the labour of others.

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Art. 10. The right of citizens to personal ownership of their incomes from work and of their savings, of their dwelling houses and subsidiary household

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421 economy, their household furniture and utensils and articles of personal use and convenience, as well as the right of inheritance of personal property of citizens, is protected by law.

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471 Art. 11. The economic life of the Belorussian SSR is determined and directed by the State national economic plan with the aim of increasing the public wealth, of steadily improving the material conditions of the working people and raising their cultural level, of strengthening the Belorussian SSR, and of consolidating the independence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and strengthening its defensive capacity.

461 Art. 12. In the Belorussian SSR work is a duty and matter of honour for every able-bodied citizen, in accordance with the principle: "He who does not work, neither shall he eat."

The principle applied in the Belorussian SSR is that of socialism: "From each according to his ability, to each according to his work."

Chapter II. The State Structure

631 Art. 13. For the purpose of mutual assistance among the Union Republics along economic and political lines, as well as along the line of defence, the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic voluntarily united with the other equal Soviet Socialist Republics, namely:

The Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic,
The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic,
The Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic,
The Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic,
The Georgian Soviet Socialist Republic,
The Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic,
The Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic,
The Moldavian Soviet Socialist Republic,
The Latvian Soviet Socialist Republic,
The Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic,
The Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic,
The Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic,
The Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic,
The Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic and
The Karelo-Finnish Soviet Socialist Republic

in a federal state, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Proceeding from the aforesaid, the Belorussian SSR ensures to the USSR, as represented by its higher organs of state power and organs of state administration, the rights defined in Article 14 of the Constitution of the USSR.

Outside of the spheres set forth in Article 14 of the Constitution of the USSR, the Belorussian SSR exercises state authority independently, retaining its sovereign rights in full.

Art. 14. The Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic consists of the Baranovich, Bobruisk, Brest, Vitebsk, Gomel, Grodno, Minsk, Moghilev, Molodechno, Pinsk, Polesye and Polotak Regions.

642 Art. 15. The Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic reserves the right freely to secede from the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Art. 16. The territory of the Belorussian SSR may not be altered without its consent.

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641 expert and defence organizations, cultural, technical and scientific societies; and the most active and politically conscious citizens in the ranks of the working class and other sections of the working people unite in the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks), which is the vanguard of the working people in their struggle to strengthen and develop the socialist system and is the leading core of all organizations of the working people, both public and state.

[694] Art. 102. Citizens of the Belorussian SSR are guaranteed inviolability of the person. No person may be placed under arrest except by decision of a court or with the sanction of a procurator.

Art. 103. The inviolability of the homes of citizens and privacy of correspondence are protected by law.

Art. 104. The Belorussian SSR affords the right of asylum to foreign citizens persecuted for defending the interests of the working people, or for their scientific activities, or for their struggle for national liberation.

Art. 105. It is the duty of every citizen of the Belorussian SSR to abide by the Constitution of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, to observe the laws, to maintain labour discipline, honestly to perform public duties, and to respect the rules of socialist intercourse.

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[685] Art. 106. It is the duty of every citizen of the Belorussian SSR to safeguard and strengthen public socialist property as the sacred and inviolable foundation of the Soviet system, as the source of the wealth and might of the country, as the source of the prosperity and culture of all the working people.

Persons committing offences against public socialist property are enemies of the people.

Art. 107. Universal military service is law.

Military service in the armed forces of the USSR is an honourable duty of the citizens of the Belorussian SSR.

[687] Art. 108. To defend the fatherland is the sacred duty of every citizen of the Belorussian SSR. Treason to the country -- violation of the oath of allegiance, desertion to the enemy, impairing the military power of the state, espionage -- is punishable with all severity of law as the most heinous of crimes.

Chapter IX. The Electoral System

666 Art. 109. Members of all Soviets of Working People's Deputies -- of the Supreme Soviet of the Belorussian Soviet Socialist Republic and the regional, district, city, settlement and rural Soviets of Working People's Deputies -- are chosen by the electors on the basis of universal, direct and equal suffrage by secret ballot.

Art. 110. Elections of deputies are universal: all citizens of the Belorussian SSR who have reached the age of 18, irrespective of race or nationality, sex, religion, educational and residential qualifications, social origin, property status or past activities, have the right to vote in the election of deputies and to be elected, with the exception of insane persons and persons who have been convicted by a court of law and whose sentences include deprivation of electoral rights.